

Chapter 3 Differences Among Alternatives

Introduction

This appendix contains management direction that differs among the alternatives. Most direction contained in the proposed Revised Management Plans applies to all action alternatives. In most cases, differences between the no action and the action alternatives are described here. Also, differences among the action alternatives where the direction in the proposed Revised Management Plan does not fit the theme of an alternative are described here.

Direction for Alternative 1 (No Action)

Carry forward all unit-wide direction in the existing land and resource management plans, as amended. In particular, standards and guidelines will differ in Alternative 1 from Alternatives 2 through 5 in the areas of paleontology, wildlife, prairie dogs, livestock grazing, and travel management.

Infrastructure

Direction for Alternatives 1 and 2

Goal 4 – Effective Public Service

An effective organization is needed to achieve the agency's mission. Objectives relate to generating scientific information, protecting and maintaining resources and facilities for agency and public use, and fulfilling basic land-stewardship responsibilities to help ensure sustainable ecosystems and provide multiple benefits to people.

The agency is also committed to a customer-service ethic focused on serving the needs of customers, including low-income, minority, and historically under-served communities. This commitment includes having an innovative workforce that is representative of the American society as a whole.

Goal 4.a - Improve the capability of the Nation's forests and grasslands to provide diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities

Objectives

1. Within 15 years, annually maintain at least 20 percent of the Forest Development transportation system roads.
2. Within 15 years, complete at least 10 percent of high-priority facility reconstruction projects.

Goal 4a Objectives, cont.

3. Within 5 years, manage to standard at least 20 percent of buildings, bridges, and other facilities.

Standards

1. Allow motorized use on new or existing travelways (See Appendix G, Glossary), or as designated on the travel map, unless a documented decision shows:
 - Motorized use conflicts with Management Plan objectives;
 - Motorized use is incompatible with the recreation opportunity spectrum class;
 - Travelways are located in areas closed to motorized use and are not "designated routes;"
 - Motorized use creates user conflicts that result in unsafe conditions related to weather conditions;
 - Physical characteristics of travelway(s) preclude any form of motorized use;
 - Travelways do not serve an existing or identified future public need; or
 - Financing is not available for maintenance necessary to protect resources.
2. Allow motorized wheelchair use in a non-motorized area so long as that wheelchair meets the legal definition of being "designed solely for use by a mobility impaired person for locomotion that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area". (Title V, Section 507(c) (2) of the Americans with Disabilities Act).
3. Keep drinking water safe for human consumption at Forest Service facilities or at facilities under special-use permit by the Forest Service.

Guidelines

1. Do not invest in new facilities on lands meeting the criteria for disposal.
2. Newly acquired facilities will not be retained unless sufficient maintenance funding is available or cooperative maintenance can be secured, and a substantial government benefit can be demonstrated.
3. Require a special-use permit for motorized access to private land where access for the general public is not available.
4. Install gates along all existing range allotment and pasture fences at intervals to provide reasonable access (not exceed 1 mile), as funding allows. Install gates along all new fences at intervals not to exceed 1 mile and at fence corners.
5. Provide a minimum of 12-foot openings for gates to allow access for firefighting equipment, as funding allows.
6. Install user-friendly gate closures, as funding allows (See Appendix E for details).
7. Use cattle guards or hinged metal gates on popular and designated travel routes, as funding allows. Place a gate adjacent to each cattle guard.
8. Build new and reconstructed fences to the specifications listed in Appendix B to provide for big game (adults and young) movement during all seasons, where desired.

9. Do not construct any woven wire fences.
10. Prioritize for reconstruction those fences that do not meet big game specifications. Prioritize removal of existing woven wire fences. Mitigate existing fences that do not meet big game specifications.
11. Leave interior gates that are not along transportation corridors open when not needed to control livestock.
12. See the following publications for fence construction for livestock, including bison: Facilities for Handling, Sheltering and Trailing Livestock, September 1987, Society For Range Management; Fences, July 1988, Society For Range Management; and Facilities for Watering Livestock and Wildlife, January 1989, MTDC 89-1.
13. Restrict capital investments on lands with non-federal mineral estate ownership in areas of moderate to high mineral development potential if purpose of capital investment would conflict with mineral development.
14. Perform site-specific mineral evaluations prior to making substantial capital investments, such as recreation developments, on Federal mineral estate in areas of moderate to high potential for valuable mineral deposits. Depending on conclusions from mineral evaluation and potential for mineral development, consider alternate location for capital investment, withdrawal of locatable minerals, or restrictions on surface occupancy for leasable minerals.

Direction for Alternative 5

Dakota Prairie Grasslands only

Standards

1. Restrict motorized travel to existing roads and trails; prohibit motorized use in designated non-motorized areas and the Maah Daah Hey and North Country Trails (except for authorized administrative use, such as grazing administration, noxious weed control, or fire control).
2. Allow motorized wheelchair use in a non-motorized area so long as that wheelchair meets the legal definition of being "designed solely for use by a mobility impaired person for locomotion that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area". (Title V, Section 507(c) (2) of the Americans with Disabilities Act).
3. Keep drinking water safe for human consumption at Forest Service facilities or at facilities under special-use permit by the Forest Service.

Guidelines

1. Do not invest in new facilities on lands meeting the criteria for disposal.
2. Newly acquired facilities will not be retained unless sufficient maintenance funding is available or cooperative maintenance can be secured, and a substantial government benefit can be demonstrated.
3. Require a special-use permit for motorized access to private land where access for the general public is not available.

Guidelines, cont.

4. Install gates along all existing range allotment and pasture fences at intervals to provide reasonable access (not exceed 1 mile), as funding allows. Install gates along all new fences at intervals not to exceed 1 mile and at fence corners.
5. Provide a minimum of 12-foot openings for gates to allow access for firefighting equipment, as funding allows.
6. Install user-friendly gate closures, as funding allows (See Appendix E for details).
7. Use cattle guards or hinged metal gates on popular and designated travel routes, as funding allows. Place a gate adjacent to each cattle guard.
8. Build new and reconstructed fences to the specifications listed in Appendix B to provide for big game (adults and young) movement during all seasons, where desired.
9. Do not construct any woven wire fences.
10. Prioritize for reconstruction those fences that do not meet big game specifications. Prioritize removal of existing woven wire fences. Mitigate existing fences that do not meet big game specifications.
11. Leave interior gates that are not along transportation corridors open when not needed to control livestock.
12. See the following publications for fence construction for livestock, including bison: Facilities for Handling, Sheltering and Trailing Livestock, September 1987, Society For Range Management; Fences, July 1988, Society For Range Management; and Facilities for Watering Livestock and Wildlife, January 1989, MTDC 89-1.
13. Restrict capital investments on lands with non-federal mineral estate ownership in areas of moderate to high mineral development potential if purpose of capital investment would conflict with mineral development.
14. Perform site-specific mineral evaluations prior to making substantial capital investments, such as recreation developments, on Federal mineral estate in areas of moderate to high potential for valuable mineral deposits. Depending on conclusions from mineral evaluation and potential for mineral development, consider alternate location for capital investment, withdrawal of locatable minerals, or restrictions on surface occupancy for leasable minerals.

Livestock Grazing Direction by Alternative

Alternative 1

No adjustments are made for animal equivalents to account for variations in livestock weight.

No limits on average pasture size and density of water developments.

Alternative 2

No limits on average pasture size and density of water developments.

Alternative 3

Maintain or increase average pasture size, and structural improvements may be constructed to achieve desired condition objectives.

Alternative 4

Maintain or increase average pasture size, and allow no net gain in water developments.

Within 15 years, establish at least 5 percent of rangelands on national grasslands as bison- only grazing areas. Priority for designating areas for bison grazing are areas with primitive or semi-primitive recreation settings, low amounts of structural improvements and high amounts of secondary range, and areas that may be of important to restore bison in the landscape to Native American Indian tribes.

Alternative 5

Maintain or increase average pasture size, and allow no net gain in water developments.

Non-Native and Invasive Species, Noxious Weeds, and Insect Management Direction by Alternative

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5

Standard

1. Once appropriate consultation with state agencies has taken place, allow only certified noxious weed-free products for recreational animal feed or revegetation projects. This includes use of certified hay or straw, and heat-treated, or other appropriately processed products.

Guideline

1. Where technically and economically feasible, use genetically local (at the ecological subsection level) native plant species in revegetation efforts. To prevent soil erosion, non-native annuals or sterile perennial species may be used while native perennials are becoming established.

Paleontological Resource Direction by Alternative

Alternative 1

Standards

1. Continue with current policy direction, which allows on-top-the-surface collection of invertebrates without a permit for personal, non-commercial use.

Standards, cont.

2. Allow collection of on-top-the-surface petrified wood for personal, non-commercial use, without charge but with a free-use permit, or without a permit in designated areas, according to the following stipulations (See 36 CFR 228.62[e]):
 - No known heritage values, scientific values, or other prohibitive restrictions occur at the site.
 - The maximum amount of collected petrified wood per person per day does not exceed 25 pounds, and that the total maximum weight in one calendar year per person does not exceed 250 pounds. Permits may be issued, however, to museums, educational institutions, and similar groups for larger amounts.
3. Allow vertebrate fossil collection with authorization, only to qualified individuals or institutions.
4. Prohibit the commercial collection of fossils.
5. Conduct paleontologic surveys prior to ground-disturbing activities according to the process outlined in Appendix J.

Guideline

1. Survey and post land boundaries where paleontological sites have Fossil Potential Classification sensitivity ranking of 3, 4, or 5, as funding allows (See Paleontological Appendix for details).

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4

Standards

1. Allow non-commercial collection of paleontological resources with authorization (permit or area designation).
2. Allow collection of on-top-the-surface petrified wood for personal, non-commercial use, without charge but with a free-use permit, or without a permit in designated areas, according to the following stipulations (See 36 CFR 228.62[e]):
 - No known heritage values, scientific values, or other prohibitive restrictions occur at the site.
 - The maximum amount of collected petrified wood per person per day does not exceed 25 pounds, and that the total maximum weight in one calendar year per person does not exceed 250 pounds. Permits may be issued, however, to museums, educational institutions and similar groups for larger amounts.
3. Protect key paleontological resources (Classes 3, 4 and 5 of the Fossil Potential Classification) from disturbance, or mitigate the effects of disturbance, to conserve scientific, interpretive and legacy values. (See Paleontological Appendix for details).
4. Prior to ground-disturbing activities, conduct paleontologic surveys in any area where there is a high potential to encounter these resources according to the process outlined in Appendix J.

Guideline

1. Survey and post land boundaries where paleontological sites have Fossil Potential Classification sensitivity ranking of 3, 4, or 5, as funding allows (See Paleontological Appendix for details).

Alternative 5**Standards**

1. Allow on-top-the-surface collection of invertebrates without a permit for personal, non-commercial use.
2. Allow collection of on-top-the-surface petrified wood for personal, non-commercial use, according to the following stipulations (See 36 CFR 228.62[e]):
 - No known heritage values, scientific values, or other prohibitive restrictions occur at the site.
 - The maximum amount of collected petrified wood per person per day does not exceed 25 pounds, and that the total maximum weight in one calendar year per person does not exceed 250 pounds. Permits may be issued, however, to museums, educational institutions and similar groups for larger amounts.
3. Prohibit the commercial collection of fossils.
4. Protect from disturbance or mitigate from disturbance key paleontological resources (Classes 3, 4 and 5 of the Fossil Potential Classification) to conserve scientific, educational, interpretive and legacy values. (See Paleontological Appendix for details).
5. Conduct paleontologic surveys prior to ground-disturbing activities according to the process outlined in Appendix J.

Guidelines

1. Designate areas to allow for on-top-the-surface collection of vertebrate fossils, as funding allows. (See Paleontological Appendix for details).
2. Survey and post land boundaries where paleontological sites have Fossil Potential Classification sensitivity ranking of 3, 4 or 5, as funding allows (See Paleontological Appendix for details).

Prairie Dog Direction by Alternative**Alternative 1**

Unit-wide direction in the existing land and resource management plans and prairie dog management plans would continue. Direction varies between national grasslands and forests.

Alternative 2

Guidelines

1. Limit the use of rodenticides outside of 3.63 Management Areas to one or more of the following situations:
 - Human health and safety risks occur in the immediate area.
 - To achieve desired vegetation conditions. (See vegetation matrix in Geographic Area direction for details)
 - Prairie dog colonies occur on isolated National Forest System tracts less than 3,000 acres.
 - Unwanted colonization on adjoining lands is occurring and the most likely source of prairie dogs appears to be colonies located along the property boundary on National Forest System lands.
 - To maintain forage to support permitted livestock.
2. Reevaluate prairie dog management if the total acreage of fully active prairie dog colonies grows to the following levels:

Table 3-1. Maximum Acreage of Fully Active Prairie Dog Colonies (Alternative 2)

Great Plains Dry Steppe Province Unit	
Buffalo Gap/Oglala National Grasslands	2 percent of potential suitable
Cedar River/Grand River National Grasslands	2 percent of potential suitable
Little Missouri National Grassland	2 percent of potential suitable
Thunder Basin National Grassland	2 percent of potential suitable
Nebraska National Forest (Pine Ridge unit)	Not applicable
Great Plains Steppe Province Unit	
Fort Pierre National Grassland	1 percent of potential suitable
Nebraska National Forest (Bessey Ranger District)	Not applicable
Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest	Not applicable
Prairie Parkland Province Unit	
Sheyenne National Grassland	Not applicable

Alternative 3

Standards

1. Prohibit use of rodenticides (above-ground grain baits) for reducing prairie dog populations outside the period October 1 to December 31 to reduce risks to migratory birds. To reduce risk to other wildlife, do not use burrow fumigants in prairie dog colonies.
2. Limit the use of rodenticides (grain-baits) for reducing prairie dog populations to the following situations:
 - Public health and safety risks occur in the immediate area
 - Damage to private and public facilities, such as cemeteries and residences

Guidelines

1. Consult U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved, state-wide prairie dog conservation strategies for additional guidance on the appropriate response to complaints of unwanted prairie dog colonization on adjoining agricultural lands (private, state, and tribal lands).
2. Prohibit prairie dog shooting where significant risks have been identified for other wildlife species or where shooting is preventing or slowing a desired prairie dog population expansion. Restrictions shall be year-long or seasonal, and dates of seasonal restrictions shall vary depending on the species at risk. Coordinate and consult with appropriate wildlife agencies prior to implementation of restrictions.

Alternative 4

Standards

1. Limit the use of rodenticides outside of 3.63 Management Area to address health and safety risks.
2. Prohibit recreational shooting of prairie dogs by area closure.

Guidelines

1. Emphasize the use of vegetation management and other nonchemical methods in managing colony growth and establishment.
2. Reintroduce prairie dogs into suitable habitat, where desired and as funding allows.
3. Reevaluate prairie dog management if the total acreage of fully active prairie dog colonies grows to the following levels:

Table D-2: Maximum Acreage of Fully Active Prairie Dog Colonies (Alternative 4)

Great Plains Dry Steppe Province Units	
Buffalo Gap/Oglala National Grasslands	20 percent of potential suitable
Cedar River/Grand River National Grassland	20 percent of potential suitable
Little Missouri National Grassland	20 percent of potential suitable
Thunder Basin National Grassland	20 percent of potential suitable
Nebraska National Forest (Pine Ridge unit)	Not applicable
Great Plains Steppe Province Unit	
Fort Pierre National Grassland	5 percent of potential suitable
Nebraska National Forest (Bessey Ranger District)	Not applicable
Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest	Not applicable
Prairie Parkland Province Unit	
Sheyenne National Grassland	Not applicable

Alternative 5

Standards

1. Limit rodenticide use to October 1 and December 31 to reduce risks to migratory birds and species of concern.
2. Prohibit the use of burrow fumigants.

Guidelines

1. Limit the use of rodenticides outside of 3.63 Management Areas to one or more of the following situations:
 - Human health and safety risks occur in the immediate area.
 - Prairie dog colonies occur on isolated National Forest System tracts less than 3,000 acres.
 - Unwanted colonization on adjoining lands is occurring and the most likely source of prairie dogs appears to be located along the property boundary on National Forest System lands.
 - To achieve desired vegetation conditions (see vegetation matrix in Geographic Area direction for details).
2. Emphasize the use of vegetation management and other nonchemical methods in managing colony growth and establishment.
3. Reevaluate prairie dog management if the total acreage of fully active prairie dog colonies grows to the following levels:

Table D-3: Maximum Acreage of Fully Active Prairie Dog Colonies (Alternative 5)

Great Plains Dry Steppe Province Units	
Buffalo Gap/Oglala National Grasslands	10 percent of potential suitable
Cedar River/Grand River National Grasslands	10 percent of potential suitable
Little Missouri National Grassland	10 percent of potential suitable
Thunder Basin National Grassland	10 percent of potential suitable
Nebraska National Forest (Pine Ridge unit)	Not applicable
Great Plains Steppe Province Unit	
Fort Pierre National Grassland	3 percent of potential suitable
Nebraska National Forest (Bessey Ranger District)	Not applicable
Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest	Not applicable
Prairie Parkland Province Unit	
Sheyenne National Grassland	Not applicable

Rangeland and Forest Health by Alternative

There is no difference in direction pertaining to Goals and Objectives, however, desired vegetation composition and structure do differ between alternatives.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1.c – Increase the amount of forests and grasslands restored to or maintained in a healthy condition with reduced risk and damage from fires, insects and disease, and invasive species.

Objective

1. Within 10 years, implement management practices, including prescribe fire, that will move all affected landscapes toward desired vegetation composition and structure as described in Geographic Area direction.

(Reference Chapter 2, Summary tables for differences in desired vegetation composition and structure)

Recreation Direction by Alternative

Alternative 5

Guidelines

1. Where prairie grouse and upland bird hunting is a priority, retain high cover levels through the upland bird-hunting season.
2. Do not allow livestock grazing in woody draws and riparian areas during the deer rifle hunting season.

Goals and Objectives for Alternative 3

Goal 2 – Multiple Benefits to People

Within the limitations of maintaining ecosystem health and conserving biological diversity, forests and rangelands are managed to meet people's needs for uses, values, products and services.

Goal 2.a – Improve the capability of the Nation's forests and grasslands to provide diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities

Objectives

1. Annually maintain or reconstruct 20% of the National Grassland and Forest trails to regional standards.
2. Over the next 15 years, provide readily available information concerning recreation opportunities for developed, historic, and appropriate cultural sites.

Objectives, cont.

3. Within 5 years, provide appropriate directional signing to key recreation sites and inform people about the public access routes to national grasslands and national forest.
4. Within 10 years, complete site and recreation plans, including rehabilitation and re-vegetation strategies. As demand warrants, increase recreational opportunities where compatible with resource objectives. These opportunities may include trails, campgrounds, and interpretation.

Goals and Objectives for Alternative 5

Goal 2 – Multiple Benefits to People

Within the limitations of maintaining ecosystem health and conserving biological diversity, forests and rangelands are managed to meet people's needs for uses, values, products, and services.

Goal 2.a - Improve the capability of the Nation's forests and grasslands to provide diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities

Objectives

1. Within 15 years, maintain or reconstruct to standard at least 80 percent of the trails rated poor or critical.
2. Provide readily available off and on-site information on recreation opportunities for developed and historic sites.
3. Within 5 years, provide appropriate directional signing to key recreation sites.
4. Within 10 years, develop or update and implement site plans, as funding allows, for all developed recreation sites. Site plans should address reconstruction or improvement of existing facilities, development of new facilities, and vegetation management (including noxious weeds).

Dakota Prairie Grasslands only

1. Within 10 years,
 - Construct 2 to 3 new campgrounds on the Little Missouri National Grassland, and add 1 to 2 new campgrounds on the Sheyenne National Grassland;
 - Construct 1 to 2 boat launch and take-out sites on the Little Missouri River;
 - Construct 2 to 3 new ponds at least 50 acres in size on the Little Missouri National Grassland or the Grand River National Grassland;
 - Construct 1 new picnic area on Grand River National Grassland.
2. Within 3 years, inventory conditions at high use dispersed recreation site. Within 10 years, implement rehabilitation or revegetation practices as necessary.
3. Provide interpretive information in response to customer surveys.

Nebraska National Forest only

1. Within 10 years,
 - Construct 1 additional primitive campground on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland
 - Construct at least one new pond at least 50 acres in size.
 - Construct at least 50 miles of trail and one interpretive trail.
 - Construct Prehistoric Prairie Discovery Center and associated trails.
2. Within 3 years, inventory conditions at high use dispersed recreation site. Within 10 years, implement rehabilitation or revegetation practices as necessary.
3. Provide interpretive information in response to customer surveys.

Thunder Basin National Grassland only

1. Within 10 years,
 - Construct at least one new campground.
 - Construct at least 2 water oriented recreation opportunity sites.
 - Construct at least 4 areas that are hardened dispersed recreation sites.
 - Develop one motorized route for ATV's and bikes at least 100 miles long.
 - Develop opportunities to enhance or create systems of trailheads and travel routes, as opportunities and funding become available. Emphasize these developments in the Upton, Cow Creek Buttes, Weston, and Red Hills areas.
 - Develop a complex of opportunities in the Upton - Osage area combining motorized and nonmotorized trails and hardened dispersed recreation sites.
2. Within 3 years, inventory conditions at high use dispersed recreation site. Within 10 years, implement rehabilitation or revegetation practices as necessary.
3. Provide interpretive information in response to customer surveys.